

Greater Metropolitan Unregulated Water Sharing Plan - Wianamatta – South Creek management zones

The draft *Water Sharing Plan for the Greater Metropolitan Region Unregulated River Water Sources 2023* will replace the 2011 plan. This factsheet explains the proposed changes in the Wianamatta - South Creek Water Source.

Replacing the 2011 Greater Metro plan

Water sharing plans are the primary legal framework for managing water access and sharing in NSW. The plans are valid for 10 years and are subject to a formal review by the Natural Resource Commission (NRC) near the end of their term. This review identifies any changes necessary to deliver better outcomes for all water users, including the environment.

The *Water Sharing Plan for the Greater Metropolitan Region Unregulated River Water Sources 2011* (the 2011 plan) commenced 1 July 2011. In 2021, the NRC recommended a 2-year extension with the replacement plan due to commence by 1 July 2023.

The draft replacement *Water Sharing Plan for the Greater Metropolitan Region Unregulated River Water Sources 2023* was developed using the best-available scientific information, updated hydrological modelling and considered recommendations made by the NRC in their [review](#) of the 2011 plans effectiveness.

The draft plan is on public exhibition from 27 June to 7 August, and feedback from the public is encouraged. More information can be found on the department's [website](#).

Wianamatta - South Creek catchment

The area previously known as South Creek has had an official name change to Wianamatta- South Creek. Wianamatta means 'the Mother Place' in Dharug language and has been added to the name to recognize the Dharug people as the traditional owners of the land. Any reference to Wianamatta-South Creek is a reference to the previously names South Creek area.

The 2011 plan divides the Wianamatta - South Creek catchment into the Upper Wianamatta - South Creek Management Zone, and the Lower Wianamatta - South Creek Management Zone

Upper Wianamatta - South Creek Management Zone

Upper Wianamatta - South Creek Management Zone is a rainfall-fed, headwater catchment with low ecological values and high levels of hydrological stress as identified in our ecological risk assessment. This management zone takes in most of the rivers and creeks above the two sewage

treatment plants (STPs) that discharge water into Lower South Creek. Flow classes and access rules are established referencing the South Creek at the Great Western Highway gauge (212048) located in the downstream part of the management zone. Unregulated river licence holders can currently access water when flows at the gauge are above 0.2 megalitres (ML)/day, approximately 92 per cent of the time.

Lower Wianamatta - South Creek Management Zone

The Lower Wianamatta- South Creek Management Zone receives inflows from tributaries and from the Upper Wianamatta - South Creek management zone through South Creek while also taking in the catchment of Eastern Creek. There are two (STPs in the management zone that discharge treated wastewater:

- St Marys STP into Ropes Creek (average 31.4 ML/day)
- Quakers Hill STP into Breakfast Creek (average 32.3 ML/day).

These STP discharges make up most of the water available in the system and should be made available to licence holders.

The Lower Wianamatta - South Creek Management Zone has been identified as having medium ecological values and high levels of hydrological stress in our updated ecological risk assessment. Flow classes and access rules are established using South Creek at Richmond Road gauge (212297) and have been based off 'natural flows' even though the gauge is located downstream of the St Marys STP. This provides licence holders with access to the STP discharges. Unregulated river licence holders can currently access water when flows at the gauge are above 3 ML/day. St Marys discharges an average of 31.4 ML day meaning that users have always had access to flows during the lifetime of the plan.

Changes proposed in the Wianamatta - South Creek catchment

Several changes have been proposed in the Wianamatta - South Creek catchment (Figure 1). The replacement plan creates the new Wianamatta – South Creek Water Source, redefines the boundaries of all management zones and changes the flow classes and access arrangements that determine when water can be taken. The Eastern Creek Management Zone, a new management zone will be used to manage extraction from rivers and creeks receiving discharge from the Quakers Hill STP.

Creating the new Wianamatta-South Creek Water Source

The replacement plan proposes the creation of the new Wianamatta-South Creek Water Source. The Wianamatta-South Creek Water Source will take up the entire South Creek catchment and consist of 3 water management zones:

1. Upper Wianamatta South Creek
2. Lower Wianamatta-South Creek

3. Eastern Creek (newly created)

Table 1 – Components of the Wianamatta-South Creek Water Source

Current Water Management Zone	Proposed Water Source	Proposed Water Management Zone
Upper South Creek Management Zone	Wianamatta-South Creek Water Source	Upper Wianamatta- South Creek Management Zone
Lower South Creek Management Zone		Lower Wianamatta-South Creek Management Zone
		Eastern Creek Management Zone

Upper Wianamatta-South Creek Management Zone – boundary and flow class change

Currently the Upper South Creek boundary takes in **most** of the rivers and creeks located above the Lower South Creek STPs. The replacement plan proposes to extend the boundary of the Upper Wianamatta-South Creek Management Zone north so that this management zone takes in **all** Lower South Creek users located above the STPs.

Licence holders on Werrington Creek, Claremont Creek, Angus Creek, Reedy Creek and upstream of the confluence of South Creek and Ropes Creek or Eastern Creek and Breakfast Creek will now be located in the Upper Wianamatta-South Creek Management Zone. These users will be subject to all the rules of their new management zone including access rules referencing the South Creek at Great Western Highway gauge (212048). This gauge is not influenced by STP releases.

Moving all Lower South Creek users located above the STPs into the Upper Wianamatta-South Creek Management Zone ensures that all users that do not have access to STP releases are managed together and managed appropriate to the flows in the river they have access to.

Updated flow data and risk assessment information for the Upper Wianamatta-South Creek Management Zone has driven a change in the flow classes. Our assessment shows that extraction in the region has a high likelihood of impacting the local water-dependent ecology at base or low flows. To mitigate this, we propose to increase the very low flow class from 0.2 ML/day to 0.3 ML/day with users able to access approximately 90 per cent of the time compared to approximately 92 per cent in the previous plan. These rules offer greater protection for basic landholder rights users and the environment, including key fish habitat as identified by DPI Fisheries.

Creating the new Eastern Creek Management Zone – boundary and flow class change

Users on Eastern Creek are currently subject to access rules based on flows at the South Creek at Richmond Road gauge (212297). This gauge is influenced by STP discharges from St Marys. Eastern Creek users receive STP discharges from the Quakers Hill STP. **The current gauge and access rules do not accurately represent conditions for users on Eastern Creek.**

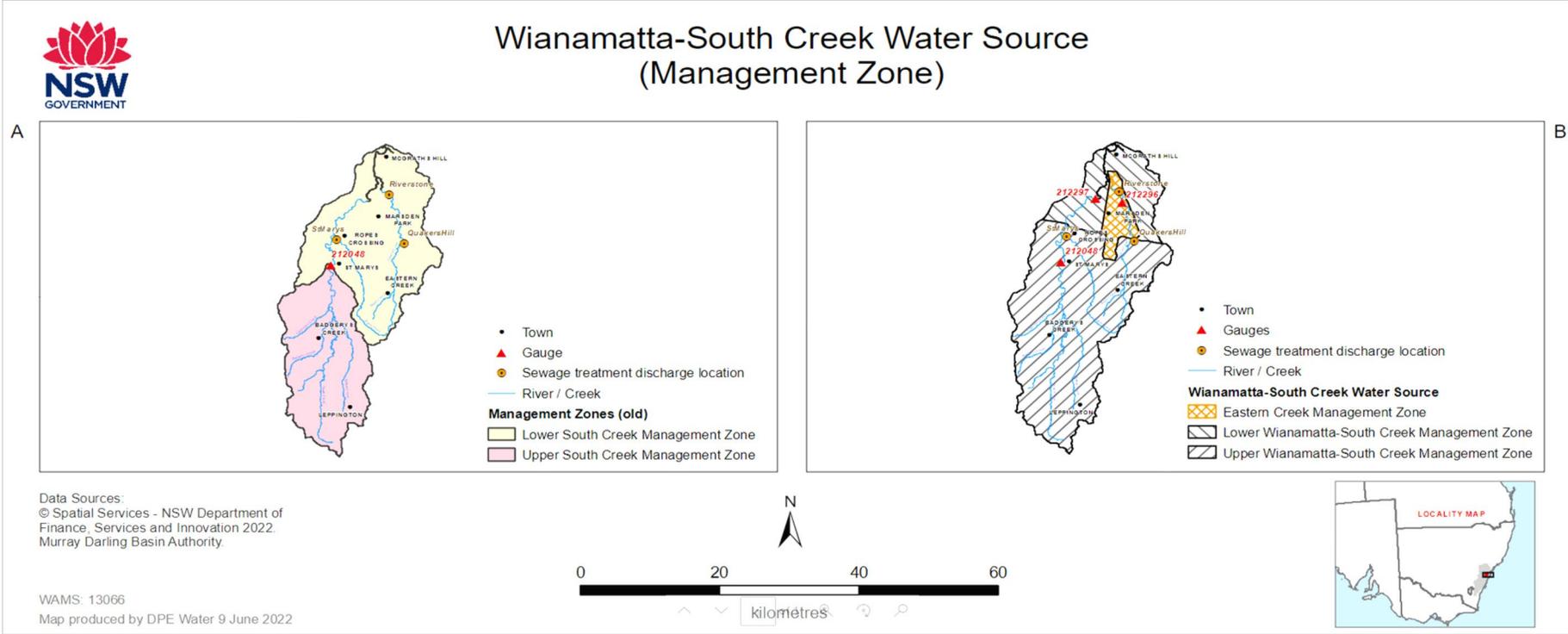


Figure 1 Current management zones in Wianamatta - South Creek (A) versus the proposed changes in the replacement plan (B)

The replacement plan proposes the creation of a new management zone; the Eastern Creek Management Zone that will better represent conditions for users on Eastern Creek and manage releases from the Quakers Hill STP. This zone will take in all users on Eastern Creek downstream of the Quakers Hill STP until the confluence of Eastern Creek and Breakfast Creek (where the St Marys and Quakers Hill STP discharges meet). This will also include users on Bells Creek.

Flow classes will be established in the Eastern Creek Management Zone based on data from the Eastern Creek at Riverstone gauge (212296), downstream of the Quakers Hill STP. A very low flow class of 10 ML/day is based upon minimum releases from Quakers Hill plus peak daily irrigation demand in this management zone. This will provide protection of low flows for basic landholder rights users and the environment, including key fish habitat as identified by DPI Fisheries, while ensuring irrigator access to STP discharges. The change is not expected to have any impact on users as the minimum flow recorded at 212296 during the Plan was above the proposed 10ML/day 100% of the time.

Lower Wianamatta-South Creek Management Zone – boundary and flow class change

The boundaries of the Lower Wianamatta-South Creek Management Zone are proposed to change in the replacement plan. The management zone will be reduced as areas upstream of the STPs will become part of the Upper Wianamatta-South Creek Management Zone and areas of Eastern Creek will become their own management zone.

Updated flow data and risk assessment information for the Lower Wianamatta-South Creek Management Zone has driven a change in the flow classes. Our assessment shows that extraction in the region has a high likelihood of impacting the local water-dependent ecology at base or low flows. This includes threatened frogs such as the Red-crowned toadlet, Giant burrowing frog and the Green and Golden Bell frog. To mitigate this, it is proposed to increase the Very Low Flow Class from 3 ML/day to 7.7 ML/day. This will provide low flows protection for basic landholder rights users and the environment, including key fish habitat as identified by DPI Fisheries whilst ensuring irrigator access to St Marys STP discharges. The change is not expected to have any impact on users as the minimum flow recorded at 212297 during the Plan was above the proposed 10ML/day 100% of the time.

How will this affect my licence?

Water access licences specify the water source and management zone from which water must be taken. Any changes to water sources or management zone must be reflected on the access licence. The Department of Planning and Environment will be issuing updated water access licences and water supply works approvals condition statements following commencement of the plan.

More information

The draft water sharing plan, fact sheets and other supporting material are available from the department's [website](#).